



**2010-2011
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report
Handicapped Access to Government Facilities**

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Introduction:

During interviews with Madera City and County officials and the Chairman of the City of Madera Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Council, the Grand Jury determined that there was an issue with handicapped accessibility to the courthouse, the Government Center, and parking structure. As a result, the Grand Jury decided to further investigate the situation.

Findings:

The Grand Jury found that the nearest handicapped parking to the courthouse is located approximately two blocks from the entrance.

The Grand Jury found that there are currently no handicapped parking spaces in front of the courthouse or on G Street. During the construction of the Government Center and parking structure, G Street was converted to a one-way street with diagonal parking and handicapped spaces. After construction, the handicapped parking spaces on G Street were removed.

The Grand Jury found that although there are handicapped parking spaces on Fifth Street, near the library, it would be necessary for a handicapped person to cross G Street and still continue for two blocks to the courthouse entrance.

The Grand Jury found that the County is responsible for providing parking spaces in the parking structure for use by the court, pursuant to Contract No. 8303-C-2007.

The Grand Jury found that in the Government Center parking structure only eight out of 400 parking spaces are designated as handicapped and all are located on level one. This ratio does not meet the standards established by Federal law. The remainder of level one spaces are reserved parking. There is no handicapped parking on levels two, three, and four.

The Grand Jury found that according to County officials, there is reluctance to provide handicapped parking spaces on levels two, three, and four due to the unreliability of the two elevators. Officials cited a number of mechanical failures coupled with the difficulty of obtaining elevator repair and maintenance.

The Grand Jury found that in the parking structure there is no safe passage from parking spaces to the elevators and structure exits. Pedestrians exiting their vehicles must navigate the traffic lanes.

The Grand Jury found that the north entrance to the courthouse has been fenced off by the court barring public access. The north entrance has ramps, is handicapped accessible, and close to the parking structure.

The Grand Jury was denied access to court personnel to discuss handicapped parking issues and accessibility to the courthouse.

Conclusions:

The Grand Jury concludes that handicapped access to the courthouse and Government Center is inadequate both in proximity and in the number of spaces provided.

The Grand Jury concludes that the Government Center parking structure is unsafe for users.

The Grand Jury concludes that the unreliability of the parking structure elevators creates a safety hazard for the public.

The Grand Jury concludes that there is no handicapped parking on streets adjacent to the Government Center and the courthouse.

The Grand Jury concludes that a handicapped person's access to the courthouse is hindered.

The Grand Jury concludes that it was unwise to fence off the north entrance to the courthouse which already provided handicapped accessibility, without providing alternate handicapped access.

Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends that additional spaces be designated as handicapped parking on level one of the Government Center parking structure.

The Grand Jury recommends that safety features, such as mirrors at the turns, be installed in the parking structure to assist drivers and pedestrians.

The Grand Jury recommends handicapped parking on G Street in close proximity to the courthouse entrance, until the new courthouse is completed.

The Grand Jury recommends that handicapped access to the courthouse be provided through the north entrance.

Respondents: Written response required pursuant to PC 933(c)

Madera County Board of Supervisors
200 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

Madera City Council
205 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

Information: Response Optional

Chairman, City ADA Advisory Council
205 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

Resource Management Agency Director
2037 West Cleveland Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

Presiding Judge
Madera Superior Court
209 West Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637